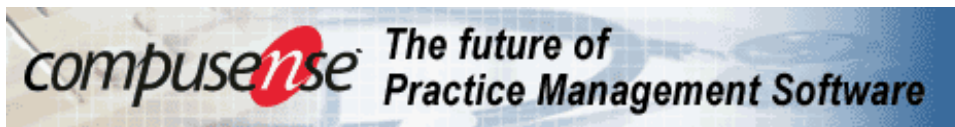


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HHS: Security Still on Tap

(December 12, 2002) The final HIPAA data security rule remains on schedule for publication on Dec. 27, though the rule still is in the clearance process, according to Karen Trudel, deputy director of the new Office of HIPAA Standards in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Federal officials defend the long delay in publishing the final security rule; the Department of Health and Human Services proposed the rule in August 1998. HHS and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services had to wade through several thousand comments on the proposed rule, then ensure the final rule was compatible with the HIPAA privacy rule, final versions of which have twice been published.

Coordinating the security rule with the privacy rule "is a lot harder than it sounds," Trudel says. "We did it, we did it again, and now we're making sure it's right."

A final rule making modifications to the transactions and code sets rule also is scheduled for a Dec. 27 publication in the *Federal Register*. The final rule will combine two previously proposed rules making modifications, Trudel says. During the course of implementation, providers, payers and vendors have found technical glitches or inconsistencies in the mandated transactions implementation guides. HIPAA's designated standards development organizations have addressed these concerns and the final rule adopts the fixes. The rule also adopts updated versions of pharmacy-related transactions and code sets.



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